

Persons Living in Poverty

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program.

Definition: The total number of people in poverty.

Limitations: Estimates exclude all persons living in military families and the population residing in institutional group quarters. Some examples of institutional group quarters are correctional facilities, juvenile institutions, and nursing homes. However, the estimates do include persons residing in non-institutional group quarters, such as college dormitories, fraternity, and sorority houses.

The official poverty threshold varies only by age of the household head (under and over age 65), and family size. There is no differentiation for the cost of living from one area or region of the country to another

Data Detail: Poverty estimates are made using statistical modeling techniques. Current poverty data are estimated from five symptomatic indicators: (1) federal income tax returns, (2) Food Stamp program participation rates, (3) the number of Supplemental Security Income program recipients, (4) Bureau of Economic Analysis income data, and (5) poverty data from the most recent federal decennial census.

The SAIPE program began in the mid-1990s as a response to a Congressional mandate. When Congress re-authorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1994, they included a provision requiring that current poverty data for children be used in allocating funds to school districts.

The poverty estimates are open to challenge from the public. The challenge period for the 2001 and 2002 poverty estimates released in November 2004 extends to March 7, 2005. After that date the Census Bureau will no longer accept challenges. But up until that point, it is possible (although not very likely) that one or more of the poverty estimates will be changed as a result of a successful challenge.

For More Information:

For information about the SAIPE program, see:
www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe/

For general information about poverty, see:
www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty.html